

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 001928

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -
ROBERT PALLADINO
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

1. Summary: KMT Chairman Lien Chan's departure for China today and his telephone conversation with President Chen Shui-bian yesterday concerning his China trip received extensive coverage April 26 in the major Taipei dailies. The pro-unification "United Daily News" carried a front-page headline that read: "Bian wishes Lien a smooth and successful trip to mainland China." A page-two news story in the "United Daily News" reported that Lien does not rule out the possibility of discussing the Anti-Secession Law with Chinese President Hu Jintao. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, ran a banner headline on its page two that said: "Bian said there is no 1992 consensus, but Lien did not respond," and the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" carried a page-two news story with the headline: "Bian: Both sides of the Taiwan Strait are not only ruled separately but are also separate." The centrist "China Times" carried a news analysis by Washington correspondent Liu Ping on page two that said April 19 marked a turning point with regard to the U.S. attitude toward Lien's visit to China as AIT Director Doug Paal met with Lien and PFP Chairman James Soong in Taipei, and U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Randy Schriver met KMT-PFP Representative to the United States Jason Yuan in Washington that day.

2. Editorially, the pro-independence "Liberty Times" and the limited-circulation, pro-independence English-language "Taipei Times" continue to attack Lien's visit to China and said it might be the first step toward disaster. The centrist "China Times" editorial urged the ruling party to face the recent China fever, coordinate the various views inside the party and come up with a viable policy. A news analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" and the editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-unification English-language "China Post" looked positively upon Lien's trip, saying it will open a new page for cross-strait relations. End summary.

A) "Lien Chan Would Be Well Advised Not to Act as a Sinner That Harms [Taiwan's] National Status and Dignity"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 800,000] commented in its editorial (4/26):

"Peace across the Taiwan Strait is not only what the Taiwan people hope to see but also the expectation of international society. When [KMT Chairman] Lien Chan arrives in China, if he could promote justly and fearlessly Taiwan's sovereignty and dignity and demand that China lay down its butcher knife, it is certain that no one would reproach him for working together with the Chinese Communist Party in restraining Taiwan. But if Lien wants to surrender Taiwan's sovereignty to China in exchange for the latter's grant of peace, not only would the Taiwan people not tolerate it, but the international community would also oppose such a move that would sabotage the regional balance of power. . In short, even though Lien travels to China in a private capacity, he needs to act with perfect propriety, neither haughtily nor humbly, and he should try not to do anything that could harm [Taiwan's] national dignity. ."

B) "Things That a Ruler Must Do and Must Not Do"

The editorial of the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 600,000] said (4/26):

"The challenge that this new wave of China fever has created for the ruling party is [that it should learn] how to face the issue, coordinate the diversified opinions inside the party, and come up with a viable policy direction like what a ruling party should do. The ruling party should not just invariably oppose and insult [the opposition parties] since it is the privilege of the opposition party to oppose and criticize [the ruling party]. ."

". Competition between different political parties is inevitable, but national interests should always come first [before] the interests of any single political party. Long-term interests [of a country] should also be deemed more important than short-term loss and gain, and proactivity is always better than passivity. If our ruler and ruling party could uphold these principles, Taiwan's politics would have a new look, and both our domestic policy and cross-strait relations could be modified according to circumstances . ."

C) "Lien's China Trip Opens a New Page for Cross-Strait Relations"

Journalists Hsiao Heng-chien and Tung Chih-sen observed in a news analysis of the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 600,000] (4/26):

". The meeting between the KMT chairman and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) general secretary is, without doubt, historically significant. In terms of the interaction between two political parties, the CCP is a ruling party while the KMT is already an opposition party. Even though the two parties shared substantial resentment or grudges during the civil war period, it is already too difficult to discuss all these previous details now. Also, people should not look at the meeting as the talks between the KMT and the CCP because the KMT is already an opposition party; it no longer stands on an equal footing with the CCP in terms of the political power it possesses. The symbolic significance of the KMT-CCP meeting should thus be more important than other aspects of significance.

"But for Lien and the KMT, the significance of reconciliation between the KMT and CCP is not so important; what's more important for the KMT is that it hopes to open a new road for the current cross-strait relations through this reconciliatory move. As for where the road will lead to, the ball is still in the hand of the ruling authorities. The key still lies in the ruler as to whether he wants the cross-strait relations to reap."

D) "Moving forward, or toward Disaster?"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (4/26):

". Although both Lien and Soong are acting without explicit government authorization, Chen has given his blessing. This will give people in this country and abroad the wrong idea that Lien and Soong represent government opinion. The president had only just taken part in the March 26 protests against China's 'Anti-Secession' Law when he turned around and gave this blessing. He said he hoped they would pave a new path for cross-strait relations. But what about the arms procurement bill, which continues to languish in the legislature? If the people of Taiwan care so little about their own defense, who will believe us in the future if China steps up its military threats? .

"Dialogue between the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party may be significant in historical terms. However, as long as Taiwan's political parties cannot agree on the basic principles of national sovereignty and policy toward China, then these two trips may turn out to be not a glorious beginning to better times, but the first step toward disaster."

E) "Lien Begins Peace Journey"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] noted in an editorial (4/26):

". Lien's eight-day-four-city trip, followed by that of another Taiwan opposition leader, James Soong of the People First Party next week, also for peace and reconciliation, will definitely serve to help bail Beijing out from its current diplomatic quagmire. .

"Lien's trip certainly will add pressure to the Chen administration to speed up rapprochement with the mainland, a 'priority task' it promised but failed to carry out after five years."

PAAL